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SENSITIVE

Jack Harvey
OLC
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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Comments on "Is U.S. Forfeiting the Arms Race to Russia?", US News and World Report, 19 October 1970

General

The primary purpose of the article is to demonstrate that the answer to the question posed by its title is definitely "yes". The article, which is purportedly based on a series of background discussions with high level US military strategists, cites a number of comparisons between present and projected US and Soviet forces to support the conclusion that the US is in imminent danger of falling far behind the USSR in military power, particularly strategic nuclear forces. We believe that in this connection the judgments in the article--both stated and implied--generally tend to overstate the relative Soviet position.

Strategic Forces

The figures given for Soviet deployments of ICBMs, SLBMs and bombers are generally consistent with our assessments. Most of the other judgments pertaining to relative strategic power are not. The failure to consider the impact of MIRV technology on the strategic balance is a most important omission from the article.

The assessment of strategic power is a difficult and complex process. There are many ways to measure the quantities and qualities of strategic forces, but no single measure provides the complete picture necessary for assessing relative military capability.

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The quantitative measures most often used are: number of delivery vehicles; number of individual weapons; total megatons; and equivalent megatons. Although the US now lags the Soviet Union slightly in land-based ICBMs, the US lead in SLBMs and bombers gives it a slight advantage today in total delivery vehicles. If Soviet deployment programs proceed as expected, this relationship will be reversed and the Soviets will have about 20 percent more delivery vehicles by the mid-1970s.

When multiple independently targetted reentry vehicles (MIRVs) are deployed, the holdings of individual weapons in the strategic forces of both sides will be substantially greater than the number of delivery vehicles. The US holds a lead in MIRV technology. The Soviets have not yet tested multiple warheads which are independently targetted, although it may be possible for them to develop such weapons by 1972. Even assuming successful Soviet development of MIRVs, we expect the US to have about a 3-to-1 advantage in individual weapons by the mid-1970s.

A measure that the article focuses on to show the US disadvantage is "nuclear explosive power" or more frequently described as total megatons. Using the total megatons measure, the USSR now has less than twice as much capability as the US, rather than a six-fold edge as the article asserts. Moreover, although the Soviet margin in total megatons may increase somewhat by 1975, it is not expected to increase to anything like the margin of 12- or 15-to-1 projected in the article.

As missile systems have become more accurate--thus permitting the use of smaller warheads--total megatons as a measure of strategic power has become less relevant. Because the lethal radius of a nuclear weapon is roughly proportional to the square root of the yield--the area of destruction of a 9-megaton weapon would be only about three times greater than a one-megaton weapon--total megatons substantially overstates the comparative effectiveness of large warheads against urban targets.

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Equivalent megatons--found by taking the square root of total yield--provides a more realistic measure of the overall destructive capability of a force. Using equivalent megatons as the measure, the US now has about a fifty percent lead over the USSR, and by 1975 the equivalent megaton measure for the two countries is expected to be roughly equal.

The article asserts that "The U.S.S.R. is clearly striving to achieve a first-strike capability..." The USSR does not now have any significant capability to limit damage to itself by launching a strategic first-strike on the US, and the attempt to achieve such a capability would require buildups in strategic offensive and defensive programs much larger than those now in progress. It is extremely unlikely that the Soviets would believe that they could initiate the massive buildups that would be required without stimulating offsetting reactions by the US.

General Purpose Forces

The figures shown in the article for Soviet army manpower are incorrect. The correct Soviet figure for 1965 is about 1.2 million rather than 2.3 million, and for 1970 about 1.4 million rather than 2.0 million.

In discussing the balance in Europe the article neglects to consider that the keystone of US military policy in Europe is the NATO integrated military force. Confrontation in Europe is potentially between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, not between the US and the USSR or the US and the Warsaw Pact.

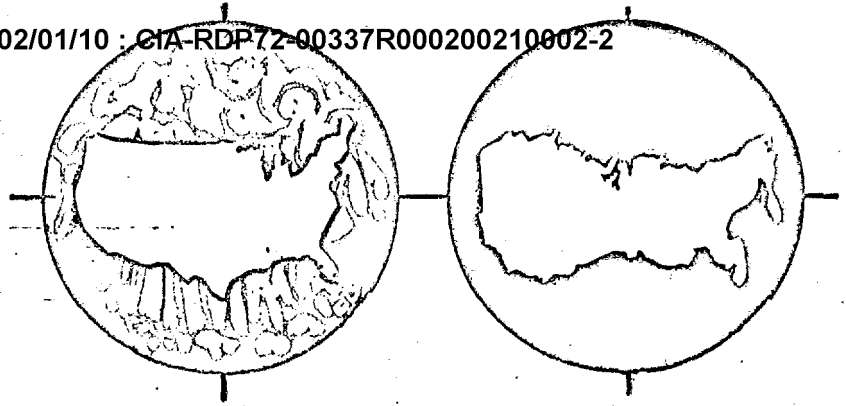
The USSR has maintained an edge over the US of at least 3-to-1 in men and 5-to-1 in tanks in the central region of Europe for many years. When force comparisons are made in terms of NATO in the central region and the Warsaw Pact, however, it is clear that the Warsaw Pact has a definite superiority only in tanks. The Warsaw Pact as a whole is somewhat inferior in numbers of men.

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IS U.S. FORFEITING THE ARMS RACE TO RUSSIA?

Military men, openly alarmed, are speaking up. They see U.S. defenses in rapid decline, while Russia leaps ahead. Without a shift of strategy, they say, coming years could lead to disaster.

The Pentagon's top strategists are warning the Nixon Administration that, if present policies continue, there will be only one superpower left in the world five years from now—Russia.

In most categories of military power—missiles, modern aircraft, ships, submarines, troops under arms, tanks and research—the Soviet Union will have matched or exceeded the U. S. by 1975, these high-ranking planners say.

Russia's intercontinental-range strike forces already have six times as much nuclear explosive power as the U. S. and, at the present growth rate, the ratio in 1975 will be 12 or 15 to 1.

As a result, by this analysis, the United States:

- Will have to maintain its nuclear-deterrent force on a hair-trigger alert to guard against being overwhelmed by a Soviet surprise attack.
- Will see allies becoming neutral or seeking accommodation with the Soviets in light of U. S. inability—or unwillingness—to give military support in confrontations involving Russian-backed forces.

Further, the strategists say, the U. S. is losing its ability to respond effectively to attacks on its forces by enemies employing conventional weapons.

"Time Is Running Out"

The strategists—in detailed discussions with staff members of "U. S. News & World Report"—stressed that "time is running out for the U. S."; that, unless there is a reversal of policies, and soon, the balance of power will have shifted decisively to the Soviet Union, and American influence will be limited to domestic affairs.

The relative power relationship is such that, if the Soviets elect to place missiles in Cuba again, it would be doubtful whether the U. S. could force their withdrawal as it did in 1962, according to these high-ranking staff officers.

At present, the U. S. is reducing its overseas commitments, cutting back on its armed forces and maintaining a numerical ceiling on its missile arsenal, while the Soviets pursue an exactly opposite course.

One measure of the nation's military plight, the strategists report, is the fact that the U. S. does not have the means—airlift or sealift—to quickly bulwark its 200,000-man force in Europe in the event of a Soviet surprise assault.

The possibility that Europe will drift into neutralism, or into Soviet ties, has been considered by the planners, one of

The accompanying article is based on a series of background discussions at the Pentagon with high-level military strategists of all U. S. services. The assessments of these analysts are based largely on military factors alone and for most part do not take into consideration possible changes in future policies here and abroad.

whom observed, "The United States cannot survive if the resources of Europe are wedded to those of the Soviet Union."

In the strategists' opinion, the Nixon Doctrine—a reduction in overseas commitments—is a recognition of the country's declining power.

At the Pentagon, the Nixon Doctrine is often privately interpreted as a signal not only that "there will be no more Vietnams" but that the U. S. is going to pull out of Asia, resulting in a power vacuum from Japan and Korea to west of Suez, which the Soviets will hasten to fill.

Further, it is the strategists' belief that Russia is embarked on a careful long-range plan to outflank Europe along the North African littoral, noting that Egypt, Libya and Algeria are now counted as within the Soviet sphere of influence from a military standpoint. They expect Morocco to fall within that sphere within the next few years.

By 1975 the strategists say they expect the Mediterranean to be "a Soviet lake."

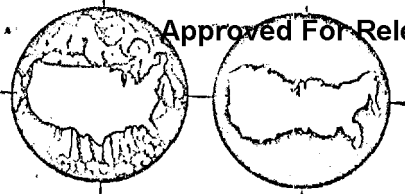
In assessing the current troubles in the Mideast, the strategists point out that Japan and Europe are heavily dependent on the region's oil resources; that if the Soviets can control the fuel supplies through the Arabs, their influence in the councils of Europe and the Far East will rise sharply.

While the strategists generally agree on what the future holds if present policies continue, they vigorously disagree on how the reduced U. S. defense funds should be allocated—which service should have the dominant strategic role and thus the larger service and most room for promotion.

This disagreement is reminiscent of the bitter interservice fight during President Eisenhower's Administration, stemming from the same cause—limited funds.

Out of that struggle, which the Air Force won, came the

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Russia may be able to assign two warheads to each U. S. missile site—and still have 500 left over to send against cities.

The Russians' announcements that they have repeatedly fired missiles over 8,000 miles and hit less than 1½ miles off target are not dismissed by the Pentagon experts.

These experts also note that there is nothing in Soviet military literature, published for the guidance of commanders, on the subject of "overkill." On the contrary, Russian theoreticians emphasize the "one-act war" with stress on the surprise use of overwhelming force.

From all these facts, the strategists have come to the con-

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doctrine of "massive retaliation." This was supplanted by President Kennedy's "flexible response" doctrine, designed to give the nation an option short of using nuclear weapons at the outset of a major conflict.

The Navy now is making a strong bid for adoption of a sea-based strategy which would disperse the nation's missile-deterrent forces on and under the oceans. The Army and Air Force are allied to keep the bulk of the missiles on land—defended by an anti-ballistic-missile system.

As matters now stand, strategic planning in the Pentagon appears to knowledgeable observers to be in disarray, afflicted with uncertainties and indecision.

In support of their warnings to the Administration, the strategists cite these facts:

1. The U. S. and the U.S.S.R. have reached rough parity in land-launched and submarine-launched intercontinental missiles—1,710 for the U. S. to 1,650 for the Russians. Just five years ago, the U. S. had 1,318 to Russia's 390.

2. While the U. S. has at least 3 atomic warheads, deliverable by aircraft or missiles, for each 1 of the Russians', the Soviet's larger missiles have a payload capacity 2½ times that of the U. S. missiles. In the complicated mathematics of nuclear weaponry, this gives the Russians an arsenal, measured in destructive megatons, six times as large as that of the U. S.

3. If the Soviet missile-force expansion continues at the present rate, while the U. S. maintains its "freeze" on the numbers of vehicles—although not on warheads—the two superpowers will each have 8,000 to 9,000 deliverable intercontinental warheads by 1975. The weight of the Soviet warheads, however, again measured in megatons, will exceed that of the United States by a ratio of 12 or 15 to 1.

Unless there is an agreement on a missile ceiling for both nations at the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, which resume at Helsinki November 2, the strategists are projecting a Soviet missile force by 1975 of 2,500, including at least 500 of the huge SS-9s, each capable of carrying three 5-megaton warheads or one 25-megaton warhead.

A megaton is the explosive equivalent of 1 million tons of TNT. The U. S. has 54 missiles with 5-megaton warheads. The rest range from 20 kilotons—the equivalent of 20,000 tons of TNT—upward to 2 megatons.

Outlook for Nuclear Blackmail

What it all means, in the strategists' view, is this:

The U.S.S.R. is clearly striving to achieve a first-strike capability, which could be used to blackmail the United States.

They note that the United States is far more vulnerable to annihilation in a surprise attack than the Soviet Union because of the latter's larger land mass.

All the 1,054 U. S. land-based missiles are located in five easy-to-hit areas. In addition, there is a relative overconcentration of population and industry in the U. S. compared with Russia, as shown in the chart on these pages.

Defense Secretary Melvin Laird has estimated that the Soviets could destroy 90 per cent of the nation's land-based missiles in a first strike, unless they were defended by an anti-ballistic-missile system.

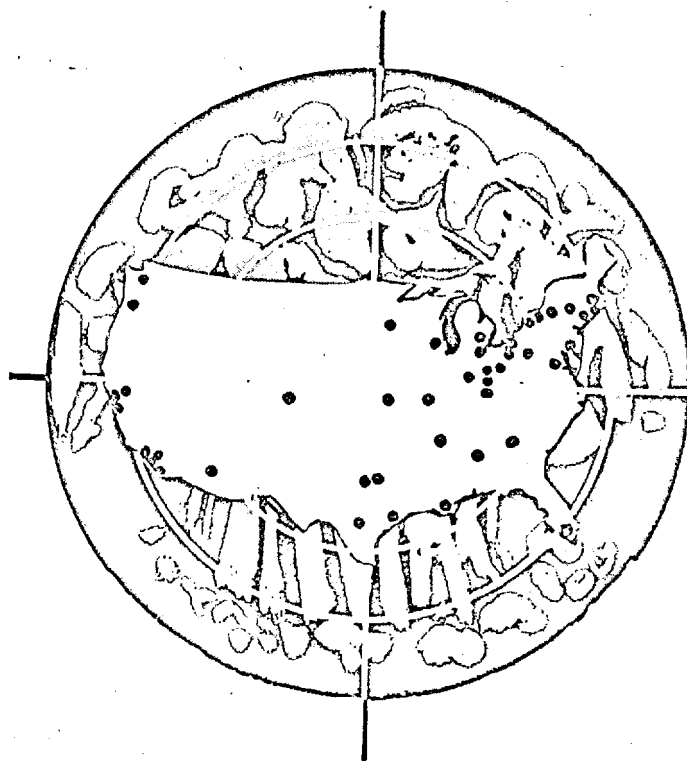
The planners are inclined to think the percentage may be even higher by 1975, given a nominal improvement in Soviet

IF RUSSIA HIT 50 BIGGEST U.S. CITIES WITH NUCLEAR WARHEADS

**86 MILLION AMERICANS
WOULD BE KILLED—**

42 per cent of U. S. population

**55 PER CENT OF U. S.
INDUSTRIAL CAPACITY
WOULD BE WIPED OUT**



**CONCENTRATION OF POPULATION
FAR MORE VULNERABLE TO NUCLEAR**

clusion that, as the U. S. falls further and further behind the Soviet Union, it must either **Approved For Release 2002/01/10 : CIA-RDP72-00337R000200210002-2** way of international life or give consideration to a preemptive strike if and when relations between the two major nations appear near a flashpoint.

By way of explanation, one of the Pentagon planners spelled out these details:

"It is an ancient military axiom that, when a strong nation and a weaker nation are headed for certain conflict, the weaker nation must strike to offset the advantages of the other by a concentration of forces and surprise.

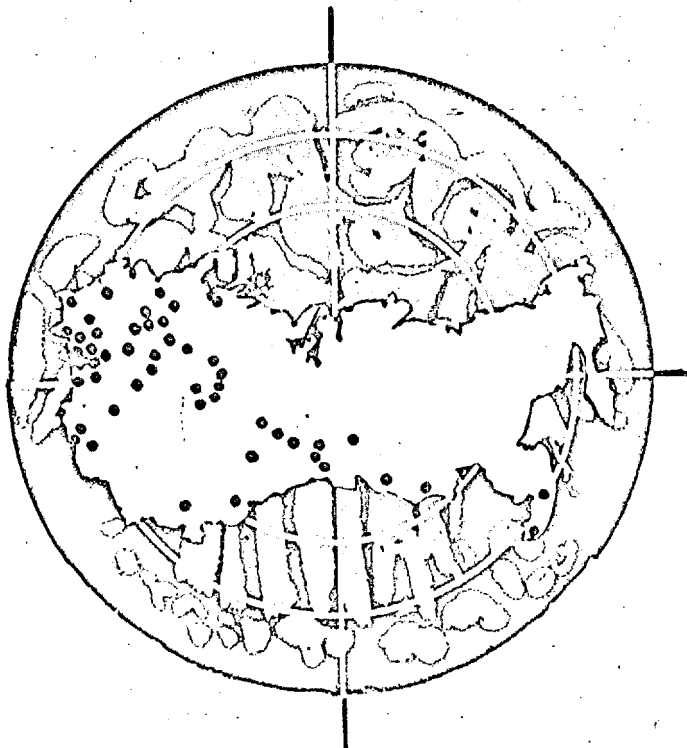
"In the thermonuclear age, that makes for a very unstable

IF U.S. HIT 50 BIGGEST RUSSIAN CITIES WITH NUCLEAR WARHEADS

**48 MILLION RUSSIANS
WOULD BE KILLED—**
20 per cent of Soviet population

**40 PER CENT OF SOVIET
INDUSTRIAL CAPACITY
WOULD BE WIPED OUT**

Source: U.S. Dept. of Defense



**AND INDUSTRY IN U. S. MAKES IT
ATTACK THAN IS THE SOVIET UNION.**

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U. S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT, Oct. 19, 1970

and dangerous world. Weakness on the part of the United

Aside from the declining strategic posture, the planners also assert that the U. S. is in danger of losing its nonnuclear-war capabilities.

This loss, they argue, would also create dangers for the United States in that the Soviet Union could embark on a "nibbling" course, seeking world hegemony through subversion and "national wars of liberation" without fear of U. S. intervention. The end result would be a U. S. isolated from the world, the strategists contend.

Out of the interviews with the high-ranking officers these facts and projections emerged:

The U. S. Army, now numbering 1.3 million men, is expected to decline by 1975 to around 750,000, while the Soviets keep 2 million men under arms.

While the number of battleworthy tanks available to the U. S. is classified, the total has "dropped by several hundreds a year in each of the past five years." The Soviets are increasing their tank forces.

By 1975 the Soviets are expected to have three times the number of tanks the U. S. has, and more than twice as many as the U. S. and all its European allies put together.

The U. S. Army, with its 9,300 helicopters, has far more mobility than the Soviet Army with its 1,500. For the U. S. ground forces to utilize that mobility, however, absolute air supremacy over the battle area is required. Whether that supremacy could be attained in any arena where the superpowers are likely to clash on the ground is regarded as doubtful.

The Soviets are building and testing new models of aircraft at the rate of 1 every 18 months. They have in operation an advanced air-superiority fighter-interceptor—the MIG-23—with a top speed of 2,200 miles an hour—nearly twice as fast as any in the U. S. inventory.

A U. S. airplane able to match the MIG-23 is only in the design stage, with production at least three years away.

The U. S. has approximately 8,500 combat aircraft, while the Soviet Union has nearly 10,000. Although the Air Force declines to project its size five years hence, one officer said he thought the inventory would be down to around 6,500 in 1975.

For all practical purposes the Soviets have rejected the long-range bomber as a useful weapons system, maintaining only a token force of 150, all old and slow. Most are stationed within striking distance of Red China.

The Soviets do have a medium-range bomber force of 700 aircraft—about half capable of supersonic speeds—around Europe and are flight-testing a swing-wing low-level attack bomber similar to the U. S. F-111.

The U. S. still clings to the long-range bomber despite the fact that the Soviets have an antiaircraft-missile force of about 10,000 weapons. The U. S. strategic bomber force consists of 450 subsonic B-52s, supplemented by 36 FB-111s.

Navy vs. Navy

As for the two navies, a comparison is difficult because the fleets are structured to meet different needs.

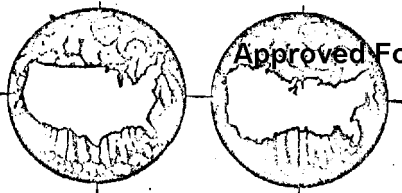
The Soviet surface fleet is designed basically to operate in narrow waters within the protective range of shore-based aircraft. It exists chiefly to protect the flanks of Russian land forces, although it is gaining some deep-water capabilities.

The primary missions of the U. S. fleets are to keep ocean supply lines open and to project U. S. power overseas.

The 392 combat ships of the U. S. Navy are organized around 14 aircraft carriers, while the Soviet fleet—551 warships—is built around 350 submarines.

This huge submarine force—Germany started World War II with only 54—is designed to throttle U. S. supply lines and severely restrict any movement by the U. S. overseas.

One indication of the differing national requirements is the
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IS U. S. FORFEITING THE ARMS RACE?

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fact that the Soviets have 1,900 auxiliary vessels—missile-carrying patrol boats, minecraft, tenders, tankers and supply ships—designed for the most part to coastal operations. The U. S. has 291 auxiliary ships.

The U. S. Navy sees one grave disadvantage: About half of its ships are 20 years old or older. Only 1 per cent of the Soviet fleet is that ancient. At 20, a warship is considered near the end of its effective life.

While the strategists are agreed that the U. S. is declining as a world power, they disagree on what course the U. S. should take to achieve the maximum possible strength with reduced funds in the future.

One of the Navy's admirals argues that the existing concentration of land-based missiles, population and industry is an invitation to annihilation by Russia.

"Unless steps are taken to disperse the deterrent force at sea, the U. S. will be subject to humiliating blackmail," the admiral said. "In a few years we will be unable to make an international move without encountering a Soviet threat.

"What the Nixon Doctrine does is propose Vietnamization of the world. That would be fine if our allies could, *in extremis*, count on U. S. support. They can't, and they know it. We will soon be seeing a scramble among our allies for accommodation with the Soviets. The French have already moved in that direction. The nonaggression treaty between Germany and Russia is an indication of what is to come."

"Hostages to Fortune"

The admiral counted troops now stationed in Europe and the Far East, outside Vietnam, as "hostages to fortune."

"If they got hit," he said, "we couldn't rescue them. To talk of maintaining trip-wire forces is so much wishful thinking. In view of our strategic posture, we would not dare move to the use of atomics. And certainly the Europeans would object if we suggested it. The European instinct for survival is very strong."

To a general, the Nixon Doctrine and the Navy's proposed strategy amount to a return to isolationism and "if that is the case, we have learned nothing from the past 25 years."

While conceding that the U. S. probably should pull out of the Far East, the general insisted the nation should keep "a minimum capability to fight a war in Europe even though the outcome would be in doubt."

The general continued, "Nothing has really changed in the world that led us to set up the European alliance in the first place. How long could the United States survive if there was a hostile or neutral Europe, a hostile China and a hostile Russia? We are not in Europe for the protection of Europe. We are there because it is in our own interests.

"The Navy talks of putting missiles at sea. That has disadvantages, because we have not solved the problem of determining a submarine's exact location, and that makes for inaccuracy. The land-based system is far more accurate."

Why is the decline in U. S. military posture taking place?

All the strategists had a one-word answer: Vietnam.

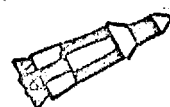
An Army general said:

"It is a matter of public psychology. We have the power and the means to rectify the situation, but not the will. Vietnam has vitiated our will for 10 years."

Shifting Balance of Armed Might . . .

HOW SOVIET UNION IS OVERTAKING U.S.

INTERCONTINENTAL BALLISTIC MISSILES



	1965	NOW	1975 (est.)
UNITED STATES	854	1,054	1,054
RUSSIA	270	1,350	1,600

SUBMARINE-LAUNCHED MISSILES



	1965	NOW	1975 (est.)
UNITED STATES	464	656	656
RUSSIA	120	300	900

STRATEGIC BOMBERS



	1965	NOW	1975 (est.)
UNITED STATES	780	486	350
RUSSIA	200	150	100

COMBAT AIRCRAFT



	1965	NOW	1975 (est.)
UNITED STATES	4,300	8,500	6,500
RUSSIA	4,100	10,000	10,000

SUBMARINES



	1965	NOW	1975 (est.)
UNITED STATES	133	144	about 120
RUSSIA	310	350	425

SURFACE WARSHIPS



	1965	NOW	1975 (est.)
UNITED STATES	380	234	about 180
RUSSIA	270	201	250-300

ATTACK CARRIERS



	1965	NOW	1975 (est.)
UNITED STATES	16	14	8
RUSSIA	0	0	0

ARMY MANPOWER



	1965	NOW	1975 (est.)
UNITED STATES	967,000	1,300,000	750,000
RUSSIA	2,300,000	2,000,000	2,000,000

Note: 1975 estimates, by U. S. military authorities, assume no significant change in present trends.